

Washington, DC - Representatives Rosa L. DeLauro (CT-3), Linda T. Sánchez (CA-39), Jared Polis (CO-2), and Mary Jo Kilroy (OH-15) introduced the Pathways Advancing Career Training Act, which would help unemployed and underemployed women train for and thrive in family-supporting work.

The PACT Act would provide assistance to states for training programs that prepare women for employment in high-wage, high-skill fields where they are often underrepresented. DeLauro's bill would support programs that address barriers to employment for single parents, displaced homemakers, and divorced and widowed women re-entering the workforce after extended periods of time at home caring for family members.

"With 60% of working women earning half or more of their families' incomes, the economic crisis has demonstrated the importance of women's work to the U.S. economy. Yet many of these women remain in low-paying jobs with little chance of advancement," said Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (CT-3). "The Pathways Advancing Career Training (PACT) Act focuses on families hit hardest by the recession by helping unemployed and underemployed women train for and thrive in family-supporting work while helping to build the highly-skilled, diverse workforce that is critical to our continued competitiveness and getting our economy back on track."

"When we lend a hand to women in the workforce, we lift up an entire family," said Rep. Linda Sánchez (D-CA). "The Pathways and Advancing Career Training Act ensures that more women are prepared to enter the high-wage, high-skill fields where they can break down the barriers that keep women-headed households in poverty. This is a common-sense solution to a competitive labor market in trying economic times."

"Promoting gender equity in high-growth occupations is good for women, it is good for working families, and it is good for our economy," said Congressman Jared Polis (D-CO) who sits on the House Education and Labor Committee. "Even in these times of high unemployment, American industries are facing skilled-labor shortages, which will only increase when the economy picks up again. By providing comprehensive job training to single mothers and unemployed women, the PATH Act provides a much-needed boost to businesses and working families suffering from the recession, while helping to diversify the American workplace."

"Increasing the number of women helping to shape our high tech future will be critical to our efforts to create jobs that pay well and create a stronger middle class. As a working mom, I know how challenging it can be to raise a family and advance a career. Everything we can do to remove the barriers to women's success in the workplace we should and this legislation will be a good start," said Congresswoman Kilroy (OH-15).

At current rates, the U.S. will require 15 million workers with postsecondary training in the next two decades, but will add just 3 million workers with this level of training. Moving women into the pipeline for high-wage, high-skill jobs will boost their earnings by as much as 20 or 30 percent, while providing employers with the skilled workforce they need to compete globally. By targeting a relatively untapped section of the current and potential workforce, this legislation provides a common-sense solution to address the looming skilled labor shortage.

PACT supports the holistic delivery of specialized services often unavailable under our current job training system, from self-sufficiency planning to personal counseling to child care and other support. Modeled on successful programs like “Hard Hatted Women” in Ohio, where more than half of graduates double or even triple their earnings, the PACT Act promises to boost economic security for families across the nation. Specifically, the PACT Act would provide:

- o Funding to states for training programs that prepare individuals for employment in high-wage, high-skill fields where they are often underrepresented.
- o Funding to states to develop and support programs that address barriers to employment for single parents, displaced homemakers, and victims of domestic violence
- o Flexibility for states in the design and implementation of programs to meet the needs of local labor markets.
- o Coordinated performance accountability measures.